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STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2018
TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC PHUM ZI
SUBJECT: TSVANGIRAI BRIEFS DIPLOMATICS ON NEGOTIATION
CHALLENGES

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (SBU) Ambassador attended a diplomatic corps briefing by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai on September 19, in which Tsvangirai discussed the status of the power-sharing agreement and intended next steps. Tsvangirai made clear that the two most significant unresolved issues were responsibility for governance of the country and the division of ministerial portfolios.

¶2. (C) Tsvangirai explained that President Mugabe's planned departure to the UN General Assembly on September 19 made it unlikely that any progress will be made in settling these contentious issues until Mugabe's return late next week. Tsvangirai also said that no ministerial allocations have yet been made. Despite the assertion that ministries have not been allocated, Tsvangirai specified that Finance, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs (police), Justice, and Local Government were "still in play." (Comment: His exclusion of Defense and National Security most likely indicates that it is a foregone conclusion they will go to ZANU-PF. End comment.) Tsvangirai told the group that it is clear that the burden to move the agreement forward rests on the MDC and that ZANU-PF's intention was to maintain control. Tsvangirai also described the spirit of the negotiations as "still positive."

¶3. (SBU) Tsvangirai then began a discussion of the agreement. He said that while it was not specified in the written document, the deal was verbally intended to last two and a half years. The negotiators' rationale for leaving this out was concern that such a timetable would lead to immediate campaigning and destabilization of government. During the life of the deal, there are annual performance reviews that give either party the ability to declare the agreement ineffective, dissolve government, and call for new elections.

¶4. (SBU) Tsvangirai reported that next week he intended to meet with NGOs and tour rural areas to see firsthand how aid distribution efforts were progressing. He also explicitly

asked for the immediate assistance of the international community in providing agricultural inputs in time for this year's planting season. Additionally, he planned to meet soon with donor groups and members of the business community.

¶5. (SBU) During the question and answer period, Tsvangirai shared that he has contacted South Africa to inform them of the difficulties in fairly resolving the ministerial allocation question. Should ZANU-PF continue to frustrate his efforts, he would also appeal to SADC to play the role of arbitrator. Asked about coup rumors, Tsvangirai confidently dismissed the prospect. He said he had met with service chiefs; while they were not necessarily happy, there was communication.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Until now, Tsvangirai was clearly hoping that ZANU-PF would negotiate in good faith. His comments today indicate that he is coming to grips with the reality that ZANU-PF is desperate to maintain control and he may again have to look for external assistance. END COMMENT

MCGEE